

Hillsborough church to begin \$4.5M expansion

By [Amanda Peterka / Messenger-Gazette](#)

February 24, 2010, 5:11PM



Courtesy Mary Mother of God church

AN ARCHITECT'S RENDERING shows the bell tower and entrance way that will greet parishioners when renovations at Mary, Mother of God Church in Hillsborough are completed later this year.

HILLSBOROUGH — Mary, Mother of God Roman Catholic Church may finally look like a church from the outside.

In a \$4.5 million renovation and expansion, to begin immediately after Easter, the church is adding a bell tower and gathering area to the front of the building on South Triangle Road, along with expanding the inside, adding a day chapel and refurbishing the pews and flooring.

Right now, the building looks more like a "country club house" than a church, as parishioner Joanna Piorek put it at a recent Mass.

The renovations are the continuation of 2005 improvements that brought a gym and 20 religious education classrooms to the building, which has housed the church since 1982. The Hillsborough Planning Board approved the plans in January 2009, and the church is now only waiting on bids from seven contractors, due March 1.

"The church hasn't really been refurbished for all the years that we've been going," said Piorek. "I know that there have been new school rooms built and things like that, but nothing really has been done to the interior of the church."

The Rev. Sean Broderick, pastor, said the renovations will remedy a traffic jam that he said happens after every Mass as about 700 people line up to leave through a narrow hallway.

"It's a strange church. It's modern, sort of fan-shaped," Broderick said. "Why it was built without a gathering space when it was built for some many people, and why it was built without a front I don't know." Broderick, a former high school principal in Ireland, came to Mary, Mother of God five years ago and found himself in the midst of renovations begun by his predecessor, the Rev. Liam Minogue. Serious planning for these new improvements started two years ago with the hiring of a church architect.

Other additions to the church will include a new roof, shrine room, and sound, lighting, heating and cooling systems. Because the wall behind the altar will be pushed back, the sanctuary will seat an extra 100 people. The stained glass behind the altar will be moved into the outside bell tower.

Churchgoers can also expect an addition to their Mass routine after the project: kneelers.

Parishioners, who are being asked to dip into their own pockets for the renovations, said the improvements are needed.

"The interior has to be done," said parishioner Joe Morrello. "There are a lot of problems with the church building. The roof leaks tremendously. You'll sit in Mass on a rainy day and you see the water come down the beams."

On March 21, pledges are due in from the 3,400 parish families to fund the renovations. The minimum for general gifting giving is \$1,000, spread out over three years. Those who cannot pledge the minimum have been encouraged to continue donating to the building fund.

"You know what, we'll give what we can," Morello said. "It's not a matter that this was decided yesterday. This was decided a number of years ago, and we started saving at that time. Just like when your family grows and your house grows. You need to expand upon it."

The parish estimates that it has about \$1.5 million saved up for the project already, and it is relying on fundraising for more. Volunteers will also help with the project. Two men, for example, have volunteered to be construction managers, Broderick said.

In the meantime, everything, from the confessional to the pianos, will be moved into the church's gym after Easter, where Mass will be celebrated until the project is complete.

Broderick said, "We're hoping to have it reopened before Christmas," Broderick said. "They tell me it can be done."